

In Search of the American Dream: the USA, c.1917-96
Topic 5: What impact did the Reagan presidency have on the USA, 1981-96?

Key Term	Meaning
Reagan Revolution	Much debated idea that Ronald Reagan's presidency led to the triumph of political and/or economic and/or social conservatism after years of general American acceptance of liberalism in those areas.
'Big government'	Reagan used 'big government' to mean too much federal interference on all levels; in state and local government, in business and in peoples lives.
Reaganomics	Reagan's economic philosophy, which emphasised low taxes and deregulation, which it was thought would stimulate the economy.
Monopolise	When a business has a monopoly of something and is the only business dealing in that thing.
Stagflation	Slow economic growth with high unemployment and rising prices.
Supply-side economics	Focusing on the supply rather than the demand in an economy. In practice this meant government should concentrate on achieving inflation-free economic growth, rather than on unemployment and providing welfare state safety nets.
Deregulation	Removing federal restrictions from businesses for example setting a minimum wage.
Conglomerate	An organisation that controls several businesses of different types. Ex: General Electric started selling light fixtures, by the 1980s it expanded into medical equipment, water, oil and gas.
Swing voters	Those whose pattern of voting depends on their individual response to each issue; they are not tied to a particular party line.
'Lame duck' President	When a president nears the end of his second term, Congress and country look to his likely successor, making it difficult for the outgoing president to achieve much.
Savings-and-loan (S&L)	A kind of bank – the equivalent of a building society in the UK. Traditionally a conservative financial institution that mostly lent money for mortgages.
Foreclosure	The repossession of a home by the mortgage lender because the borrower can no longer meet the payments.
Uncle Sam	A famous cartoon-like drawing of a distinguished looking man with the US flag on his clothing. He was taken to represent the government of the nation.
Born-again Christian	A Christian whose religion is revitalised.
Creationism	A belief in the biblical account of the origins of the earth and the life that is on it.
AIDS	Acquired immune deficiency syndrome. Acquired through the exchange of bodily fluids. It strikes down

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	the body's natural defence system, making it vulnerable to other diseases.
Trusts	Large companies that controlled and manipulated manufacture, supplies and prices to guarantee maximum profits.
Pro-choice	Advocating the legal right for a woman to choose whether or not she has an abortion.
Ms.	A title used before the surname or full name of any woman regardless of her marital status (a neutral alternative to Mrs or Miss).
Contra rebels	Opponents to the left wing Sandinista Nicaraguan government.
Iran-Contra	The 1986 scandal in which the Reagan administration covertly sold arms to Iran and diverted funds from the sale to help Contra rebels who opposed the left-wing Sandinista government in Nicaragua.
Tower Commission	Reagan appointed a commission headed by Texas Republican Senator John Tower to investigate Iran-Contra. The report was published in 1987.
Teflon President	When policies went wrong, many Americans believed Reagan was not too closely involved; the blame never stuck to him. (Teflon is a non-stick material used in saucepans)
Voodoo economics	When George H. W. Bush gave this description to Reagan's economic policies, he meant that they would need some kind of magic to work effectively.
NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement)	Provided for the gradual elimination of tariffs and other trade barriers between the USA, Canada and Mexico.
New Democrats	A group of moderate Democrats who emerged in the late 1980s. They believed that the extreme liberalism of Old Democrats was making the Democratic Party unelectable.
Baby boomers	Americans born in the post-Second World War population boom, roughly 1945-60.
JCS (Joint Chiefs of Staff)	The heads of the US Army, Navy and Air Force.

Expectation: You need to learn the spelling and definition of these key terms off by heart!

Key Individual/ Group	Role, dates, importance etc
Ronald Reagan	
David Stockman	
James Baker	
Mikhail Gorbachev	
George H. W. Bush	

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William Jefferson 'Bill' Clinton	
Newt Gingrich	
Ed (Edwin) Meech	
Bari-Ellen Roberts	